01412

c. 1965/02/08

Forward Files

SUNDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 1965

1020 Received phone call from NMCC that airfield at SOC TRANG, 90 miles southwest of Saigon, was under mortar attack. 15 shells had fallen, no casualties. 3 Flareships in vicinity, all but one helicopter had been evacuated and there were armed helicopters in the area.

1035 JCS 071459Z to CINCPAC, COMUSMACV

1. Further air strikes by U.S. Forces not favorably considered for now. Will review again when McGeorge Bundy returns.

2. Authorized strike against target #32 with #39, or other suitable target same general area as weather alternate. To use South Vietnam forces only for attack with conventional ordnance, less NAPALM.

3. To insure success, use of navigational assistance from Farm Gate, and Flak Suppression, CAP, RECCE, and SAR from U.S. resources authorized.

1045 NMCC advised Ambassador Taylor's secure and unclassified telephone at his quarters is inoperative. It will take him about one hour to reach MACV Headquarters if a ~~secure~~ phonecon with Washington is desired.

1050 CINCPACFLT forces authorized by JCS and CINCPAC to conduct Bomb Damage Assessment of Target #33 (DONG HOI) at earliest time 8 February Saigon time. Can use 3 PHOTO RECCE, 4 CAP and 8 Flak Suppression aircraft.

1125 CINCPAC 071503Z

Directed CINCPACFLT to move a Marine LAAM Battalion by air from Okinawa to DA NANG airfield, South Vietnam ASAP. On conclusion of this, aircraft are to proceed to TON SON NAUT to participate in dependent evacuation if ordered.

1150 NMCC advised by phone that attack on SOC TRANG had ended. No casualties or damage to aircraft.

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SUNDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 1965 (Cont'd)

1143 COMNAVPHIL 071416Z

Discusses capacities Hong Kong, Bangkok and Philippines as havens for U.S. dependents if evacuated from South Vietnam.

1233 CTG 77.5 (USS CORAL SEA (CVA 43)) 071446Z

This is an amplifying report of strike conducted against target #33, DONG HOI, by USS CORAL SEA aircraft.

070556Z - Strike aircraft launched

070700Z - Strike commenced

070820Z - Strike aircraft recovered except for two aircraft which had diverted to DA NANG

070950Z - 2 aircraft which had diverted were recovered aboard CVA 43

While strike appeared successful, low ceiling precludes accurate assessment of damage. This to be determined in more detail earliest on 8 February. 3 aircraft were damaged and 1 aircraft was crashed about 1 mile at sea. Pilot successfully ejected, but no information available concerning his rescue or capture. SAR will continue at first light 8 February. No enemy aircraft were sighted during strike.

Detailed strike report by USS HANCOCK not yet received.

1251 COMUSMACV 071630Z

Directs 2nd Air Division to execute strike by South Vietnamese forces against target #32 as primary and #39 as the weather alternate.

1300 CINCPACFLT 071649Z

Deleted support of 4 CAP and 8 Flak Suppression aircraft authorized by JCS for Bomb Damage assessment mission over DONG HOI, 8 February.

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SUNDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 1965 (Cont'd)

1305 Mr. Reedy announced at 12:30 p.m. that President Johnson has ordered dependents withdrawn from South Vietnam.

1423 CTG 77.7 071353Z

Reported all strike aircraft recovered aboard USS HANCOCK. One pilot was injured. He received superficial cuts about face and neck from shell fragment penetrating aircraft. There were no other injuries.

1425 CINCPAC 070620Z

DEFCON TWO was set for all Pacific Command forces in South Vietnam, Thailand and South China Sea area.

1428 Intercepted North Vietnamese message from Vinh Linh to Hanoi indicated ~~on~~ limited damage. All landline communications were lost due telegraph poles being knocked over -- very little other damage reported, according to operator chatter.

1435 MACV EAC 071820Z

Made following points:

1. No civilian casualties during attacks on PLEIKU, SOC TRANG, and TUY HAO.

2. No contact with forces attacking SOC TRANG.

3. Limited amount of equipment captured after attacks.

4. No fires from attack at PLEIKU, but were some after TUY HOA attack.

1452 CTG 77.7 071353Z

Amplifying report of strike on DONG HOI, Target #33.

Confirmed previously recorded information. Indicated strike damage assessment inconclusive. Confirmed loss of one A4 aircraft.

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SUNDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 1965 (Cont'd)

1500 Received from NMCC latest bomb damage assessment lists:

A. 10 buildings destroyed
B. 1 building burning
C. 2 buildings heavily damaged
D. In area where 5 buildings were destroyed, the area is burning

Confirming detailed message will follow.

1512 JCS 071808Z

Set forth alert for deployment of various units to WESTPAC bases. Included were:

A. Two tactical fighter squadrons to Japan and one to the Philippines
B. Seven tactical fighter squadrons to bases to be specified by CINCPAC
C. One C-130 squadron to NAHA
D. One TRTF (6 RF101 and one PPC) to Kadena, Japan
E. One TRTF (6 RB-66) to TAN SON NAUT, South Vietnam
F. One C-124 squadron to Tachikawa, Japan

Force movement to be directed later.

1532 MACV EAC 071935Z

Reported all shelling SOC TRANG airfield was short. There were no casualties. The airstrip is now secure and operational.

1558 CTG 77.7 071740Z

Reported damage assessment from strike of DONG HOI based on 100% photo coverage.

Of 12 numbered areas and 1 unnumbered area (no correllation as to what areas hold or how many buildings in each) following damage reported:

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SUNDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 1965 (Cont'd)

1558 (cont'd) Area 1 - 5 buildings destroyed, 1 building burning, and 2 buildings heavily damaged.
Area 10 - 5 buildings destroyed and area burning.

No other damage reported.

1645 Called NMCC to inquire if any information was available on the strike planned against target #32, 8 February. NMCC has nothing and will query CINCPAC.

1755 CINCPAC 072211Z to COMUSMACV

Emphasized importance of not cancelling VNAF strike 8 February. Because weather over Target 32 is not
pr promising suggested alternates as follows:

Primary - Elements of Target 4 at DONG HOI and Target 24, CHANH HOA barracks.

Secondary - Target #39, CHAP LE Army barracks.

Strike may be made where weather is best. COMUSMACV to advise CINCPAC when strike selection has been made.

1830 CTG 7.7 072216Z

Weather recc launched at 2214Z.

Estimated time over target 2249Z.

1835 Colonel Fay, NMCC, reported a telephone conversation with CINCPAC in which it was reported that the VMAF strike authorized by CINCPAC 07/2211Z to COMUSMACV will have a target time of 08/0600Z (08/100 EST) due to existing weather conditions. Additional target information is expected by OPLAN which will follow.

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2055 The President called the Situation Room and asked if we had any additional information concerning a second mortar attack in South Vietnam at which there were no casualties reported. I informed him we had received no further information on it. He then asked if we had received any additional substantiative information concerning battle damage assessment. I informed him that we have recently received a message that the photo reconnaissance mission had been aborted because of unfavorable weather conditions in the target area as the pilots had reported fog in the target area. The President stated the battle damage reports which he had received were not satisfactory and that he would have to have more substantiative information and that if they couldn't get pictures of battle damage they should call in the pilots and get a first-hand report from them on damage assessment.

This requirement was relayed at 2100 to the NMCC Team Chief with the request that they prepare the best substantiative battle information that we can obtain and relay it to us in terms of the layman's language which can be both meaningful and understood.

The President asked what time Mr. McGeorge Bundy was due to arrive and I told him at 10:20 p.m. at Andrews Air Force Base. He asked if Mr. Bundy was coming to the White House or going home and I told him it was my understanding that Mr. Bundy would proceed to his home.

I reported this conversation to Mr. Bromley Smith

2110 Colonel Purdy called the Situation Room and said that "we had all they had" and DIA analysts were still trying to make bomb damage assessment. I requested that Colonel Purdy go back to DIA (BDA Section) and ask them to come up with something for us immediately. Colonel Purdy agreed that DIA analysts should be able to assess BDA reports with their own key. He agreed to call back as soon as possible.

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2155 CTG 77.7 by message 080156Z informed JCS they plan to launch a second weather reconnaissance at 0245Z and if weather is satisfactory, which is forecast, will launch a photo reconnaissance mission at 0400Z.

2210 Situation Room asked Colonel Purdy of the NMCC to come up with a BDA report of the DONG HOI barracks area to be delivered to the Situation Room by 0600, 8 February. Situation Room asked that they go back to the field for any possible details which they may have and are still holding regarding the bomb damage. Also asked Colonel Purdy to have DIA make this report including a read-out of their IPIR #1, all pilot debriefings todate, and any further photo flights over the area which come in before 0600.

2220 COMUSMACV msg 08/0146Z informed CINCPAC UNAF strike primary target will be #32 (VU CON Military Installation) with #39 as secondary (CHOP LE Army Barracks). Time over target still estimated as 08/0600Z.

2230 Lynda called at this time for general information on the current situation in Vietnam.

8 FEB

0052 MAC J-31 3788 (DTG 08/0345Z) from COMUSMACV to CINCPAC: Operations Plan for VNAF strike 8 Feb. Aircraft involved will be:

24 A1H VNAF
6 A1E Farmgate
8 F-100 Flak Supp.
1 RF-101 Weather Recce
2 RF-101 Pathfinder/BDA
4 F-100 BDA Escort
4 F-100 MIG Cap
4 F-100 Rescue Cap
1 KC-135 tanker for rescue cap

Primary target is #32 (VU CON military installation) and secondary is #39. Target time is 0600Z (however NMCC informed us by telephone that target time will be 0730Z).

0106 MAC J-31 3790 (DTG08/0435Z) COMUSMACV to CINCPAC reports new target time for reprisal strike is 08/0730Z (0230 EST) and increases KC-135 tanker to two instead of one.

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0230 NMCC to Situation Room

Strike was off at 0700Z (0200 EST).

Strike aircraft going to target 39 which is secondary target due to weather at primary target.

Strike aircraft consisted of:

26 A1H VNAF
6 A1E
8 F-100 Flak Supp.
4 F-100 MIG Cap
2 RF-101 Pathfinder/BDA

4 F-101 BDA aircraft as yet not launched.

0300 LCDR WARD (NMCC) - Two TS messages from MACV to NMCC

1. Last 4 F-100 BDA escort airborne at 0725Z.

2. One of Flak Suppression aircraft returning to DNG streaming fuel. Cause of trouble unknown. He is accompanied by a wing man.

0315 NMCC reported aircraft has landed safely at DNG

0336 LCDR WARD (NMCC)

NMCC has a report that an A-1 pilot bailed out near DA NANG. Do not have information on whether this was an A1H or A1E aircraft.

0345 NMCC reported that A-1 pilot who bailed out was Vietnamese and has been recovered.

8 F-100 Flak Suppression aircraft have returned to DA NANG.

0346 080725Z (200T-00159) reported 24 A1H (UNAF) plus 2 spares and 4 A1H (USAF) plus 2 spares departed DA NANG at 08/0645Z, estimating target 08/0731Z. Also gave timing for flak suppression and pathfinder aircraft (8 F-100), BDA (1 RF 101) and Rescap (4 F-100).

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0415 NMCC

All A1H aircraft have landed (with the exception of the one which was lost where the pilot bailed out over DA NANG, pilot recovered)

Six to eight aircraft received battle damage.

Preliminary reports from the pilots from the strike planes indicate heavy damage in the target area.

4 MIG CAP and 4 F0100 Rescue CAP along with the KC-1 tanker are all in the traffic pattern for landing.

0500 NMCC

Colonel Rosin, DIA, will do the special BDA report for the Situation Room.

In a telephone conversation with MACV the following was relayed concerning the strike mission:

RF 101 Pathfinders indicated that the strike was very effective and produced excellent results. They noted several large fires in the strike area and also secondary explosions in the barracks buildings.

The timing for the whole operation was excellent.

F-100's together with A1E aircraft flying flak suppression
las lashed the target area and shortly thereafter the A1H VNF strike aircraft came in on target.

All aircraft recovered 0856Z (0356 EST), with the exception of the one aircraft which crashed at DA NANG.

Two F-100's sustained minor battle damage.

0528 MACV to NMCC 08/0914Z reported initial overall estimate of strike results good. Heavy damage inflicted on target.

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8 FEB

0535 MACV 08/0942Z to NMCC reported intial interview with RF-101 Pathfinder pilot indicates strike very effective and excellent results. Numerous fires, secondary explosions in barracks buildings. Al's appeared to be on target and most munitions expended. Exact battle damage not known except two F-100's reported with minor damage.

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